

Lesson Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

Lesson ID: 22055-20434

Title: COLD WEATHER TRAINING IN ALBANIA

Operation/Exercise Name: ADRIATIC OPS

Observed: 20 Feb 1996

Originator: 26 MEU SOC S-3

POC: CAPT COWDREY Commercial: (910)451-2912 DSN: 4842912

5. (U) OBSERVATION:

The possible tasking of 26 MEU (SOC) as theater reserve in support of IFOR contingencies in Bosnia required the MEU to prepare for winter operations. Pre-deployment training did not lend itself for the MEU's winter month deployment rotation, thus requiring the MEU to search for cold weather training to familiarize and acclimatize troops. Faced with the possibility of operations under extreme conditions, and assessing the weather as another "threat", the MEU aggressively sought out training opportunities to increase readiness.

6. (U) DISCUSSION:

The training area/high altitude camp (HAC) is located in Mares Meadows, Albania (41 42.00N/020 12.00E). The cold weather training conducted was coordinated on a short notice and "quick fill" in response to emerging contingencies in the former Yugoslavia. This training area was sufficient under the constraints described below and provided the basic cold weather survival and gear familiarization training. The HAC is located at approximately 7000 ft MSL and isolated from any in-country support facilities. The current infrastructure in Albania limits the host country support for unit training, thus requiring the MEU to rely solely on organic logistical support. When operating in a cold weather, mountain environment, the weather patterns are extremely unpredictable and can rapidly deteriorate negating routine air resupply. The ability to stockpile supplies for internal support became critical to the execution and sustainment of the force. The refresher training encompassed a four day period (30 Nov 95 through 03 Dec 95) to include: establishment of four man tent teams, snow shoes patrolling, occupation of a bivouac site, proper layering of clothing, cooking with peak stoves, FARP operations, and melting of snow for potable water. The Mares Meadow training area was sufficient for a company size unit and a two helicopter detachment to include FARP site and POL storage. The Albanian government and military are anxious to assist and cooperate with the MEU/ARG especially under the "Partnership for Peace" program.

7. (U) LESSON LEARNED:

The MEU "front loaded" the force with four days of supply (DOS) but the ever changing weather prevented any resupply or ability to fly to the site for four days. Recommend a minimum of seven to ten DOS class I/III (fuel for stoves and heater). The site is roughly 35 miles from Tirana but requires 16 hours to travel to due to extremely poor untrafficable roads. This prior planning enabled the force to ensure all life-sustaining

measures were in place due to the unpredictable air resupply operations. The concern for medevac and medical assistance was addressed by staging two medevac helicopters at the site, and augmenting the training units with a medical officer and EMT corpsman. This enabled the unit to stabilize any injury, and weather permitting, medevac the individual to ARG shipping. No host country medical support was sought due to the uncertain level of treatment and lack of road networks for ground transportation. The ability to maintain command and control during this remote training was supported by the employment of a SATCOM team for the duration of the exercise.

8. (U) RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Albania is suitable for cold weather training given the preparation listed in paragraph 7 above. There are more established cold weather training sites in France and Italy, however, these require very long lead times to obtain. Also, with a MEU in MODLOC in the Adriatic, the more distant sites in France and Italy are not feasible. Recommend continued use of Albania, with proper warning to higher headquarters that weather may prevent immediate recall of units for contingency purposes due to bad weather.

9. (U) COMMENTS:

None.

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